Epiphany 3 Luke 4:14-21
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Today This Scripture Is Fulfilled in OUR Hearing!
I. Today Jesus comes to us too!
II. Today Jesus proclaims good news to us too!

Dear Christian friends,

"The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him (Jesus)." NO KIDDING! Jesus was back in His hometown of Nazareth. The people there in that synagogue – some of them had been His neighbors – **friends** – **classmates** – as He grew up in Nazareth. HE KNEW them and THEY KNEW Him. Jesus had been gone from Nazareth **for a while now** but today He was "BACK HOME" in Nazareth. Jesus has become a WELL-KNOWN and **well-liked** preacher in the area. ***"He taught with authority,"*** is how people put it.

This day Jesus served as what **we'd call** a GUEST PREACHER. He's read His text – an **OT prophecy** of the coming Savior. Jesus was ready to begin His "sermon." ***"The eyes of everyone …were fastened on Him."*** WHAT would Jesus say? ***"He began to tell them, 'Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"*** THAT VERY MOMENT - as they listened to Jesus - God was fulfilling that OT promise!

Imagine having Jesus as a **guest preacher** some Sunday! There's NO NEED to imagine it! I'm not Jesus but as we now look at these verses – TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE is also fulfilled in OUR hearing! 1)Today Jesus comes **to us** too and 2)today Jesus proclaims good news **to us** too!

I. Today Jesus comes to us too!

Luke sets the scene for this Sabbath service. Jesus had been down south in Judea but NOW He's ***"returned to Galilee in the power of the (Holy) Spirit."*** Don't overlook that ***"in the power of the Spirit."*** That's a reminder of Jesus' baptism when Jesus had been ***"anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power."***

The Greek word **Christ** and the Hebrew word **Messiah** both mean "the Anointed One." Anointing – pouring olive oil on a person's head – was a very IMPORTANT OT ritual. Anointing signified that GOD HIMSELF had chosen and equipped this **particular** person for **whatever the job** was. Anointing proclaimed that **this person** was SENT BY God and BACKED BY God – this person acted with GOD'S full support and **backing**. Anointing established a person's CREDENTIALS – GOD SENT this person so you better respect and listen to him. **In the OT** prophets, priests and kings were anointed and so we speak of **Jesus being** our Prophet, Priest and King. These verses show us Jesus AS OUR PROPHET **sent by God** – Jesus bringing us a message FROM GOD the Father Himself!

The people of Nazareth NEEDED TO SEE this. Jesus was more than a LOCAL BOY who's **made it big**. Jesus was NOT JUST Mary's Son – the boy **"next door"** – an old friend from school. Jesus is the Christ – the **Messiah** – the Anointed One SENT TO THEM **by God** Himself. Jesus is the long-promised Savior. Jesus is IN FACT and JUST AS PROMISED the eternal, almighty Son of God born our flesh-and-blood brother. AS SUCH Jesus read that **OT prophecy** about the coming Savior and then told the people, ***"Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."***

We also need to **see this** about Jesus! This time of the year – **Christmas** and Epiphany – it can seem like you're BEATING a dead horse. Sermon after sermon HAMMERS THE POINT – the epiphany – the **revelation** – that JESUS IS not just a **great guy** but the Son of God Himself in the flesh. IF Jesus really is God – **and He is!** – then NO ONE – not you or me, our **children** or friends – **no one** has the right to ignore Jesus – to avoid Jesus – to contradict Jesus. IF Jesus really has been SENT TO US **by**

God with a MESSAGE FROM **God** what are we doing skipping church – not having those **daily devotions**?

Each one of us **also needs** to STOP AND ASK ourselves – to whom am I REALLY LISTENING? **How much time** EACH DAY do you spend watching TV or **sports** – listening to the radio/music – on the computer or **internet**? BE HONEST! Now **how much time** do you spend each day listening **to Jesus**? Do you SEE HOW IMPORTANT it is to faithfully be in church every week – to have those daily devotions during the week? God faces STIFF COMPETITION for our **time** and **attention** – competition FOR OUR HEARTS! How we need those QUIET TIMES of **weekly worship** and **daily devotions** to SHUT OUT the world's noise and to instead say, ***"Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening."*** How we need those times for Jesus to come to us THROUGH His Word and tell us, ***"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in YOUR hearing."***

Yes, ***"today"*** – RIGHT NOW as we sit here in church and listen to this sermon - **Jesus Himself** is coming also TO US!

II. Today He proclaims good news to us too.

Listen again to Jesus QUOTE Isaiah 61 to explain His mission. **Listen** – AND SAVOR! ***"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*** Today – RIGHT NOW! – as we listen to God's Word – this very Scripture is ALSO BEING FULFILLED in OUR hearing! Today – RIGHT NOW! – as we listen to **God's Word** – Jesus is proclaiming ***"good news"*** TO US TOO!

Did you notice how Jesus describes us? ***"The poor – captives – the blind – the oppressed."*** Jesus ISN'T TALKING about the financially ***"poor"*** – the ***"prisoner/captive"*** in a federal penitentiary – the physically ***"blind"*** – the politically ***"oppressed."*** Jesus is describing our SPIRITUAL CONDITION – what we are WITHOUT Jesus in our **hearts** and lives. THIS is how God sees us **without Jesus**. We're not a PRETTY SIGHT!

Isaiah wrote this prophecy AGAINST THE BACKDROP of the **coming Babylonian captivity** of OT Judah. Under King Nebuchadnezzar the Israelites would be ALL BUT **wiped out**. Their fields and farms would be DEVASTATED – their homes and **cities** – the temple in Jerusalem! – would be DESTROYED. Anything of value would be **carted back** to Babylon as WAR BOOTY. The people would be PRISONERS OF WAR – taken into exile in Babylon – their freedoms gone. GET THE PICTURE?

Do you see how that **describes us** SPIRITUALLY – without Jesus in our lives? ***"Poor."*** The word means to be REDUCED TO BEGGING – having **nothing** – needing **everything**. What do we have to OFFER God? We OWED God our hearts devoted to Him – our daily lives dedicated to Him – our hands and time JOYFULLY and WILLINGLY **serving** Him. We had NONE of that to give to God. ALL we could offer God were hearts and hands GRIMY and STAINED with sin.

Listening to the devil **instead of doing** what God wants the devil had taken us PRISONERS of war – marching us off to hell's **eternal exile**. The life of sin – the life of SERVING **self** and IGNORING **God** – is not a GOOD TIME but being ***"oppressed"*** – chained and beaten down with **guilt, fear**, death, etc. ***"Blind"*** – we DIDN'T EVEN see how true this was of us! **In our blindness** we DIDN'T SEE the mess and destruction **sin brings** into our lives. **In our blindness** we saw God AS THE PROBLEM!

"Poor – captives – blind – oppressed" are both a CONDITION – the state we were in – and also an ATTITUDE – how we need to see ourselves **before God**. There is absolutely no room for any CHIP on our shoulders **in our relationship** with God. GOD is not the problem – WE ARE! **God** is NOT TO

BLAME – we are. WITHOUT Jesus and God's amazing grace WE ARE nothing – we HAVE **nothing** – GOD OWES us **nothing**.

So SAVOR the words as today – RIGHT NOW in our hearing – ***"THIS Scripture is FULFILLED - He anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."***

We saw what we are WITHOUT Jesus – now see what we ALL ARE and HAVE **in Jesus**! ***"Good news to the poor."*** We had nothing – JESUS GIVES us **everything** – Jesus makes us the RICHEST people in the world. Jesus washes us clean from **every one** of our sins in His shed blood. Jesus provides us with God's FULL and FREE **forgiveness** of all our sins all bought and paid for with Jesus' own innocent sufferings and death on the cross. Jesus clothes us with His own life of perfect love and obedience. With Jesus **as our Savior** we have a whole new relationship with God. HE is our dear Father – WE are His **dear children**.

"To proclaim freedom to the captives - to set free those who are oppressed." With Jesus as our Savior we are no longer PRISONERS and SLAVES of Satan doomed to death and hell. We are now the redeemed children of God – heirs of eternal life in heaven. We've been set free from sin's GUILT – fear of **life** – the dread of **death**. WHATEVER may come **our way** we can now live **each day** SURE and CONFIDENT of God's love and **forgiveness** – His promises and **faithfulness**. We can face death EAGERLY LOOKING FORWARD to **going straight** to be with Jesus in His heavenly glory. WHAT A LIFE we now have in Jesus!

"Recovery of sight for the blind." Now we CAN SEE. We can see the truth about **our sin** – about the devil and **the mess** sin makes in our lives. But oh WHAT A SIGHT to now also see the **truth about our God**! God is our loving **Father** – our gracious **Savior** – our abiding **Comforter**. God is ***"gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love, forgiving wickedness, sin and rebellion."*** God is ***"our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in time of need."*** AVOID God? Ignore God? NO WAY!

"To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Every fifty years the OT Israelites were to celebrate what was called ***"the Year of Jubilee."*** During that year property was returned to its **original owners** – all debts were cancelled – all slaves set free. It marked a NEW BEGINNING – a return to the way **things once were**. It was ALL GRACE – pure grace. SO WE HAVE in Jesus – a whole new beginning AS GOD'S redeemed, beloved children – a whole new life WITH and FOR and UNDER our **gracious** God.

"Today" – RIGHT NOW in OUR HEARING - Jesus proclaims this to us not as a good possibility but a BLESSED REALITY. This is just what God promised us in Isaiah 61 and ***"today"*** – right now in OUR HEARING – ***"this Scripture is FULFILLED."*** Amen!

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